



Date: June 10, 2011
To: Steve Lewis, City Manager
From: Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works
Subject: Interstate 35 South Project

office memorandum

On Friday, June 3, 2011, staff received the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Interstate 35 South Project from the I-35/SH-9W Interchange ramps to approximately ½ mile north of Main Street. The document was prepared for the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) by SAIC Energy, Environment & Infrastructure, LLC (formerly Benham Companies, LLC). Four (4) public meetings have previously been conducted in Norman regarding the environmental assessment process for this project on September 24, 2007; September 18, 2008; February 26, 2009; and September 17, 2009. **The final public hearing regarding the EA will be held on Wednesday, June 22, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. at the Embassy Suites in Norman.**

The proposed improvements include expanding I-35 to a six-lane facility from the Canadian River Bridge to ½ mile north of Main Street and reconstruction of the SH-9E, Lindsey Street and Main Street interchanges. In addition, the Canadian River Bridge will be expanded with an additional lane on both sides to accommodate the SH-9E interchange ramps. The project is currently estimated to cost \$112.8 million. Funds are allocated for this project in the ODOT 8-year Construction Program. It is anticipated that the first phase of construction will involve the Main Street Interchange, particularly the noise wall, in the winter or spring of 2012.

The findings and recommendations of the EA are as follow:

- Concept 4 (modified) is the preferred alternative including:
 - Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI) design at both Main Street and Lindsey Street
 - Partial cloverleaf interchange at SH-9E with an extension to Ed Noble Parkway at Lindsey Street
 - At grade intersection at SH-9E and 24th Avenue SW intersection with three through lanes in EB and WB directions
 - Canadian River Bridge will be widened one lane in each direction to accommodate the SH-9E interchange
 - Lindsey Street Bridge is designated as an existing Advanced Bike Route and Main Street Bridge is a future Advanced Bike Route, so pedestrian and bicycle traffic must be accommodated
 - Braided ramp designs at Lindsey Street/SH-9E interchanges to address unsafe weave movements

- Environmental impacts include:
 - One acre of right-of-way needed from auto dealership
 - Wetlands (Canadian River, Merkle Creek, 3 channels, 3 ponds)
 - Endangered species (Least Tern, Arkansas River Shiner, Bald Eagle)
 - Noise at residential areas east of I-35 and north/south of SH-9E
- Concept 4 is less expensive than Concept 2B

The fundamental issues identified by staff for further review and close scrutiny are:

- Total closure of one interchange at a time for construction
- Noise wall location and design issues
- Impacts to city streets including Main Street, Lindsey Street, Ed Noble Parkway, 24th Avenue SW and Interstate Drive North
- City participation in cost of the project
- City maintenance obligations for the final project
- Surplus right-of-way upon completion at Main Street and Lindsey Street interchanges
- Storm water and flood plain issues

The attached two drawings illustrate the recommended interchange designs at Main Street, Lindsey Street and SH-9E. Over the next two weeks, staff will further evaluate the detailed EA including collaboration with ODOT staff and consultants. A 30-day comment period will follow the public hearing on Wednesday, June 22, 2011. It is recommended that the City Council conduct a Study Session on Tuesday, July 5, 2011 to consider the more detailed staff findings and provide direction regarding formal comments on the Environmental Assessment.

Interstate 35 is a significant element of Norman's transportation system and serves as a portal entry to our community. This I-35 Project is remarkably important to the City of Norman. ODOT and their design team should be commended for the thoughtful and open process as well as the creative, far-sighted designs that have been recommended. It is critically important that the City of Norman remain a key partner in the final design and construction of this project over the next five (5) years.

cc: Brenda Hall, City Clerk
Angelo Lombardo, Traffic Engineer